

## Case Study: State of Indiana Radio System

### Background

In 1997, public safety communications in Indiana formed a quilt of incompatibility. Some agencies like the Indiana State Police were on a 30-year-old lowband VHF system, others were on highband, UHF, and different types of 800 MHz systems. Interoperability was the exception. The reality of the 1990s was that there were not enough funds for every public safety agency to have all the personnel and equipment necessary to handle every situation that might arise. What the times demanded and the public deserved was an integrated communications system. Modern trunking voice and mobile data technology made it possible for different agencies to share a single communication system in which they communicated with whom they needed at a particular time. Because television does not show agencies that are unable to talk to one another, the public believes that such a communications system exists today. When most people are informed of the current communications situation, the most common response is, “You mean they can’t do it now?”

When a new police superintendent was appointed by the new governor, a survey of the Indiana State Police indicated that building a modern communications system to replace their 30-year-old system was a top priority. Since 1990, Indiana had been gradually building a State-focused Motorola analog 800 MHz system, but implementation had been delayed by lack of funding. Most of the funding had come from a Federal program, the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program, to prepare for a possible incident at the Newport Army Ammunition Plant, where 1,300-ton containers containing VX nerve agent were stored. In 1997, the Indiana General Assembly appropriated \$7.5 million to the Indiana State Police to build the next phase of the project, but the superintendent took a fresh look at the radio communications problem before continuing the old program. How should a public safety communications system be designed to meet the demands and limits of the 1990s?

The Indiana State Police Superintendent was a strong advocate of a statewide, integrated public safety communication system that any public safety agency could use. The initiative to construct such a system was called Project Hoosier SAFE-T (Safety Acting For Everyone-Together). Its goal was to bring together every public safety agency—local, State, and Federal; fire, EMS, law enforcement, emergency man-

agement, and transportation—in Indiana so they could communicate with one another.

### **Solutions—the Integrated Public Safety Commission**

To build support for the integrated communications system, the major statewide law enforcement associations and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) came together to form the Integrated Law Enforcement Council (ILEC). Subsequently, EMS and the major statewide organizations representing the fire service, counties, cities, and towns came on board. The governor formalized the status of the council through an executive order in 1998. This council became the major conduit for communication between the State and the local governments. In 1999, the Indiana General Assembly created the Integrated Public Safety Commission by statute (IC 5-26). Its membership includes a mayor, county commissioner, police chief, the Special Agent in Charge of the FBI for Indiana, superintendent of State police, fire chief, and six others representing the private sector and the legislature. It is the governance body for Project Hoosier SAFE-T.

To bring together over 475 cities and towns, 92 counties, and innumerable townships to share a common vision required a massive communication effort. Over the first 4 years, first the ILEC and then the IPSC held four governor's summits, numerous regional meetings, and focus groups. It conducted a survey of the public safety agencies and published a newsletter for all of the constituents of its members and to the members of the General Assembly and Congress. Inclusion of the State, county, and municipal political leaders was important because the hurdle to constructing this system was not the technology, but ensuring that those who controlled the purse strings considered it worth funding.

After the General Assembly failed to provide requested funding for implementation of the system in 1999, the IPSC decided to use the existing Federal and State appropriations—several million dollars that Congress had earmarked for Project Hoosier SAFE-T—to fund some demonstration projects so the legislature would have tangible evidence of what the system could do. The IPSC expected to receive applications from one or two consortiums. It received applications from 12 consortiums, comprising 68 of 92 counties, with one consortium made up of 14 counties. The consortiums generated nearly 800 letters of support from local government officials, providing a powerful story to take to the General Assembly.

In 2001, IPSC sought funding first using a surcharge on the 9-1-1 fees on land-based and wireless phones. The telephone companies opposed this effort and carried the day. Later in the session, IPSC tried to obtain some of the proceeds from riverboat gaming for a one-time infusion of cash, but the effort was unsuccessful.

In the aftermath of September 11, the lack of interoperable communications was cited as a major hindrance in public safety's response. IPSC returned to the General Assembly in 2002 focusing on the counterterrorist aspect of Project Hoosier SAFE-T. The Counterterrorism and Security Council (CTASC) made Project Hoosier SAFE-T its top legislative priority in its counterterrorism bill. The Lieutenant Governor, who served as chair of the CTASC, lobbied personally on behalf of Project Hoosier SAFE-T. The Speaker of the House, also a CTASC member, carried the bill. The Senate CTASC member and the Public Policy Committee Chair carried it in the Senate. The bill passed with difficulty. It established a funding mechanism that lasts until 2019 using Bureau of Motor Vehicles service fees and provided for bonding.

The key factor in winning the support of the locals was how IPSC structured the State's relationship to them. Project Hoosier SAFE-T would save lives and save money. The State would construct the backbone of the system—towers, controllers, and connectivity between the components of the system. There would be no user fees. The locals only had to purchase their user equipment. IPSC determined that the difference in cost between constructing a State-only system and an integrated, interoperable communications system was 4 percent. The concept of user fees was a major impediment to local participation. IPSC negotiated discounted pricing that would apply to the smallest town as well as to the largest State agency. Participation in the system was totally voluntary. The IPSC membership contained only one State representative. Most important of all, there was consistent communication with all interested parties throughout the process.

Local involvement not only made sense from a public safety standpoint, it added to the political impetus. State legislators respond more readily to concerns voiced by their constituents than by a State agency. During hearings on the bill that created IPSC, representatives of the public safety and government associations testified in a historic demonstration of unity. When the testimony was complete, the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee asked committee members if there was anyone who dared to vote against the bill.

Today, IPSC has begun the 4-year phased construction of the system. It is a Motorola Astro 800 MHz voice and data system comprised of

129 towers that is available to every local State and Federal public safety agency that chooses to join the system. The decision not to require Project 25 in the Request for Proposal was based on the higher cost and lower level of interoperability of Project 25 equipment. It also would have eliminated any competition for the infrastructure portion of the proposal because only one manufacturer makes Project 25 equipments.

The first implementation of Project Hoosier SAFE-T, Johnson County, has every public safety agency from volunteer fire departments to the sheriff's department to the Indiana State Police, State Emergency Management, and Department of Natural Resources on the new system. Lives are being saved. Johnson County estimates it saved over \$2 million dollars by using Project Hoosier SAFE-T instead of building its own system. The city of Crawfordsville, soon to be joined by Montgomery County, came on the system in June 2002 and is communicating with Indiana State Police troopers, Department of Natural Resources officers and, in the near future, some of the public safety agencies in Tippecanoe County to the north.

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## **Case Study: Tornado Alley**

### **April 1996**

A tornado ripped through south central Indiana, spreading devastation across Johnson County, Indiana. The fire and law enforcement agencies that responded could not talk to one another either because they were on one of the 18 incompatible communications systems in the county or were among the 30 plus responders sharing one channel and stepping all over each other. Communication chaos reigned. Control and calm was not restored for 96 hours.

**September 2002**

A tornado rips through the same area. Its path parallels that of the 1996 tornado, only 1,000 feet to the east. The devastation that followed was even greater than in 1996. Total damage is estimated to exceed \$7 million. This time, however, the four law enforcement and nine fire departments that responded shared a single trunked, voice communications system, implemented just 8 months earlier in conjunction with the Integrated Public Safety Commission (IPSC). IPSC is responsible for implementing Project Hoosier SAFE-T, an initiative to develop a statewide, interoperable, voice and data communication system for local, State, and Federal public safety agencies. The response to the tornado would be the first real-life test of the system. These 13 departments communicated with one another when needed, seamlessly. Control and calm for this disaster was restored in 7 hours. The new system handled 12,955 transmissions in 7 hours, almost 31 per minute and 4,000 in the peak 2-hour period. The nearly unanimous reports from various local government and public safety officials was that the new communications system performed extremely well and enabled the interagency communications that were critical to responding properly to the disaster.

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